CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

FOR UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF *καί* AND *δέ* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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A Paper

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Introduction

καί and δέ are the two most common coordinating conjunctions,[1] but the average

seminary student of Greek likely has a few false beliefs about what they indicate in the text.

Misunderstanding these terms could lead to many interpretive problems, because of their

frequency of usage: according to a Bibleworks search, καί occurs 9018 times in 5134 New

Testament verses [not including crasis]; and δέ occurs 2792 times in 2480 verses. The hope for

this paper is to trace what the average seminary student of Greek learns from the core texts in his

required classes, and then show how an understanding of discourse analysis can help clear up

misconceptions he might have derived from those readings. This is not to suggest there are flaws

in the core texts or the required classes; rather, the contention is that – while those texts and

classes ably accomplish what they set out to do – there is value in the student going on to study

discourse analysis after completing his work in those texts and classes. As Runge wrote,

"Researchers have found that there is far greater consistency and intentionality in language usage

than formal approaches would lead us to believe."[2]

The Greek Sequence at Dallas Theological Seminary

Mounce – a representative first year grammar text[3] – does not discuss the grammar of

conjunctions. There is nothing wrong with this – the subject is beyond the prevue of an

introductory grammar text – but receiving only the translation glosses can lead the student into

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[1] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 669; as he explains it [667], a coordinating conjunction is one which links syntactically equal elements together, e.g. subject to subject, sentence to sentence, etc.; see also F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* translated and revised by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 225; hereinafter, this text is denoted by "BDF."

[2] Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 4.

[3] Most professors at DTS uses this text for NT101 and NT102, which are the introductory courses in New Testament Greek, focusing on vocabulary and morphology.

misapprehension. καί is translated as "and, even, also, namely"; and δέ is translated as "but, and";[4] so the beginning student comes away thinking the two terms are sometimes synonymous, and that each has two basic meanings: for καί, adding something or singling out something; for δέ, adding something or being adversative.

Wallace – a representative intermediate syntax text[5] – explains that such connectives "relate the thoughts of a passage to one another."[6] According to Wallace, the interpreter must determine how the conjunction is being used by the context of the two ideas being linked together and any pattern of authorial expression.[7] It is not within the prevue of an intermediate syntax text to go into great depth about patterns of usage for each conjunction; rather, such a text focuses on the functional syntactical categories into which conjunctions fall. Wallace explains these functional categories of meaning, and lists the Greek conjunctions that are used in such situations. For example, both καί and δέ are used for ascensive ["even"], connective or adjunctive[8] ["and" or "also"], contrastive ["but"] and as part of correlative pairs [most often "both…and" for "καί… καί"; and "on the one hand…(but) on the other hand" for "μέν... δέ"], while δέ is also used for explanatory ["namely"] and transitional ["then" or "now"].[9] This is much more information than the student received in his first year of study, but it still leaves him with the impression that the two terms are largely interchangeable,[10] and – though it provides better clarity about potential translation glosses – it leaves the student still dependent on his subjective judgment when facing the text.

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[4] William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 19, 41.

[5] Professors at DTS use this text for NT103, which focuses on syntax.

[6] Wallace, 668.

[7] Wallace, 668.

[8] Wallace groups these two together, though most other grammarians separate the two concepts.

[9] Wallace, 670-678, 761.

[10] This is my own observation, but it was echoed by Runge, 13.

BDAG[11] – the most distinguished modern lexicon[12] – combines some of this lexical and syntactical information. The entry for δέ[13] says it can be a connective "… used in lists of similar things, with slight call of attention to the singularity of each item…" or to connect narrative segments in the way Wallace described as "transitional" or as additive but with contrast implied ["at the same time"]; or it can be used for contrast, alone, as part of a correlative pair, or even paired with καί for heightened emphasis ["but also"]. BDAG does go a bit beyond glosses, by mentioning as examples of these categories that δέ can be used to resume a discourse that was interrupted, or in narrative to mark a change in the dramatic focus or speaker. This is the type of information discourse analysis can provide; some of it is here in BDAG, though not highlighted.

BDAG's entry for καί[14] includes uses as connective, explanatory, ascensive or intensive, adjunctive, and as part of correlating pairs. It also lists under adjunctive examples of coming after an interrogative with a meaning of "still" and as combined with other particles for a variety of combined meanings. But by far, the uses listed fall under connection, though some of the examples can give surprising translations: "or" for when connecting two numbers; "of" or not translated if part of a hendiadys [the latter case when one substantive is taken as an adjective]; "and so" when introducing results; "and yet" when introducing an unexpected result; often "then" when introducing an abrupt question; "but" when introducing a parenthetical statement. In their judgment, due to Semitic influence, often καί is found connecting independent clauses in

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narrative when it might have been better to use other particles. So BDAG provides a lot more information about how καί is used and how one might translate it in these situations, but there still is nothing to help us understand why an author might choose καί or δέ over the other, or why they have so many varied uses.

In summary, the student emerging from the required classes in the Greek New Testament sequence probably will be able to translate καί and δέ correctly in most passages, but he probably will not understand any literary information those terms are conveying by the author's decision to use them in that context. Again, this is not to find fault in the classes or texts, for those classes and texts cannot cover everything [and if they had covered this topic exhaustively, this paper would be about something else]; rather the point is that despite receiving a good intermediate education in New Testament Greek, the student does not understand all the meaning which could be derived from these terms in the text.

Advanced Greek Grammar

The student who desires to continue his education in the Greek language can take an advanced Greek grammar course, which will expose him to the intermediate and reference grammars by Blass-Debrunner-Funk [BDF], Robertson, Zerwick, Burton, Moulton-Howard-Turner, and Young.

For δέ, these texts recognize primary usage as contrastive,[15] though Robertson said there is "no essential notion of antithesis or contrast" inherent in the term, but rather that "the addition

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[15] Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 183; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek, Illustrated by Examples*, translated and adapted by Joseph Smith (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1963), 157 ["almost always"]; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 1183, 1186 [though he thought this meaning was a later development]; BDF, 231; Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 331.

is something new."[16] BDF said that δέ represents a general contrast instead of something that is directly contrary, as in the case of ἀλλά.[17] On the other hand, Turner thought δέ sometimes could be strongly adversative like ἀλλά, but usually was so weak it was indistinguishable from καί.[18] Other widely mentioned usage included connective,[19] explanatory,[20] as part of a correlating pair,[21] possibly to provide emphasis ["indeed"],[22] and transitional.[23]

When discussing the transitional function, Young – who wrote an intermediate grammar that was more tied to linguistics than many other grammars – brought in some discourse analysis, by noting that δέ "often introduces a shift or change of thought: either a new development, the introduction of a new character, a change in temporal setting, the introduction of parenthetical material, or the resumption of the main event line" or to show the shift to a new subject.[24] Young elaborated to say δέ could shift the reader off the main event line as well as back to it.[25] Though speaking in terms of contrast and connection, Robertson noted δέ marked the addition of something new, could introduce a new topic which was related to the preceding discussion, or to resume after a parenthesis.[26] So we see hints of discourse analysis ideas in these discussions, but still the focus is on establishing categories, not on establishing why an author would choose this one word instead of others for a specific situation or why the word has so many categories.

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[16] Robertson, 1184.

[17] BDF, 231.

[18] Turner, 331.

[19] Young, 183; Robertson, 1183-1184; Turner, 331.

[20] Young, 184; Zerwick, 157.

[21] BDF, 232; Turner, 331.

[22] Young, 184; Zerwick, 157; BDF, 232.

[23] Young, 183-184.

[24] Young, 183-184; Turner, 331, noted the use to introduce a parenthesis.

[25] Young, 183.

[26] Robertson, 1184-1185.

Indeed, the apparent versatility of the term can lead to confusion: as Robertson remarked, it

sometimes is not even clear whether δέ is functioning for contrast or connection.[27]

For καί, these texts recognize primary usage as connective.[28] Other widely noted usage is

adjunctive,[29] ascensive,[30] explanatory,[31] as part of a correlating pair,[32] as a connector in a

hendiadys,[33] consecutive or resultative ["and so," "and yet," or "so that"],[34] as "then" when

introducing a question,[35] and occasionally contrastive.[36] Zerwick, Robertson, Turner, and Young

offered other options, but the examples could be classified easily within these larger categories,

with the exception that Young noted καί could be part of a crasis like κἀγώ [occasionally with

the meaning "if I"].[37]

Zerwick mentioned that due to Hebrew influence, καί "is used at the beginning of each

narration and of each sentence of the narration," and that καί can "introduce the main clause after

a subordinate one."[38] Young observed that καί "functions within a narrative episode to join

elements that continue the main line of the plot."[39] Less so than with δέ, there is some

recognition of καί playing a role in the discourse; but as with δέ, we are left confused about why

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[27] Robertson, 1184-1185.

[28] Young, 187-188; Zerwick, 153; Robertson, 1181-1182; BDF, 227; Turner, 334.

[29] Young, 188-189; Robertson, 1180; Zerwick, 155; BDF, 227.

[30] Young, 188; Robertson, 1181; BDF, 228; Turner, 335. Robertson said this was due to the context, not to inherent meaning in καί.

[31] Zerwick, 153-155; Robertson, 1181; Turner, 335.

[32] Young, 188; Robertson, 1182; BDF, 230; Turner, 335.

[33] Zerwick, 155.

[34] Zerwick, 153, 155; Robertson, 1182; BDF, 227; Turner, 334.

[35] Young, 189; Zerwick, 155; BDF, 227.

[36] Young, 189; Zerwick, 153.

[37] Zerwick, 154; Robertson, 1180-1183; Turner, 334-335; Young, 189.

[38] Zerwick, 153.

[39] Young, 188.

an author would choose to use καί in some places and δέ in others, or how to know which functionality καί even represents sometimes. As BDF wrote, "καί defines the relationship between clauses very inexactly, so that rather laborious interpretation is required…"[40]

The problem is that the way English conjunctions function is significantly different from how Greek conjunctions function. In English, there is a distinction in that "and" signals semantic continuity, while "but" signals semantic discontinuity, but this is not the case for καί and δέ, which leads each of them to be listed in multiple categories in a traditional analysis.[41] Runge complained, "Grammarians have worked diligently to make καί correspond to 'and' and δέ to 'but,' which has led to great confusion regarding the unique grammatical role that each plays."[42] Such analysis that forces Greek conjunctions into English functions fails to accurately tell us what καί and δέ actually do signal about the author's intended meaning. Turner expressed a representative question well: "Has Mark, who loves καί, any reason for changing to δέ at times?"[43] What the student needs to understand, as Runge wrote, is that, "The objective is not to know how to translate the connective, but to understand how each one uniquely differs from another based on the function that it accomplishes in Greek."[44]

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is based on the fact that there are "describable patterns of usage" in the system of any language.[45] If an author has a choice between καί, δέ, asyndeton, and maybe other conjunctions, then which he chooses to use implies something about what he is trying to

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[40] BDF, 228.

[41] Runge, 13.

[42] Runge, 28.

[43] Turner, 329.

[44] Runge, 19.

[45] Runge, 4.

say.[46] Furthermore, understanding what the author is trying to say involves not just

understanding the semantic meaning of his choices, but also the pragmatic effect [based on the

discourse context] of signaling through his choice of using [or not using] a specific "marked"

form.[47] If a "default" form is the one the author used when there was no particular quality to

signal, then a "marked" form is any one other than the default, which by nature of not being the

default sends a signal of some specific meaning in that context.[48] More specifically, "Greek

connectives play a functional role in discourse by indicating how the writer intended one clause

to relate to another, based on the connective [such as καί or δέ] used."[49] "Each provides a unique

constraint on how to process the discourse that follows."[50] In the New Testament, within the

epistles, within speeches reported within the narrative books, and in the narrative itself in the

Gospel of John, the default means of connecting clauses is asyndeton.[51] However, in other

contexts, asyndeton can signal a discontinuity, such as the beginning of a new topic, and καί

might be the default connection.[52]

In Greek, καί "does not mark a distinction of semantic continuity or discontinuity

[contrary to many students' misconceptions]; it connects two items of equal status, constraining

them to be closely related to each other."[53] In contexts where asyndeton is the default, καί

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[46] Runge, 5-6.

[47] Runge, 9, 12.

[48] Runge, 12.

[49] Runge, 18.

[50] Runge, 19.

[51] Runge, 20.

[52] Runge, 22.

[53] Runge, 24.

signals the new material is "being added to and associated with previous material."[54] In non-narrative contexts, καί adds new material associated with what has been related before, but without any sense of development of the argument.[55] Similarly, in John, καί signals for the new material that there is a close connection to, but no significant development in, the story line.[56] In most narrative contexts, καί itself is the default means of coordination, used to link together events until the author chooses to mark a discontinuity in the discourse, such as a new development or a transition to background material.[57]

As an English speaking student learns Greek, he learns glosses for καί that don't seem to be connective in nature, such as "even." Καί can play this ascensive role, though "even" is not part of the meaning in Greek for καί; rather this reflects the difference between how connectives are used in Greek and English.[58] The student can discern this adverbial use of καί in any context when it is not first in its clause, when it connects grammatical units of unequal rank [such as a finite verb and a participle], or when it connects non-contiguous elements across clause or sentence boundaries [always introducing what immediately follows].[59]

In Greek, δέ is what is called a "development marker": within a context of relative continuity, it signals to the reader that there is a new development coming; this helps the reader to fit the discourse into an organized pattern, to understand the author's conception of the

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[54] Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 124; see also Runge, 25, where he quotes Levinsohn as part of his discussion.

[55] Levinsohn, 124.

[56] Levinsohn, 82, 84.

[57] Runge, 26.

[58] Levinsohn, 99.

[59] Levinsohn, 100-101.

discourse.[60] Within any narration or epistolary argument, there will be changes in time, place, participants, kind of action, or topic, so the author will have many potential ways of organizing the material. Thus it is significant to notice how and when he signals his organization with the use of development markers, because it is at those spots that a new development is taking place from the perspective of the author's *purpose*.[61] An author will not use a development marker like δέ every time there is a change in one of the variables listed above, only when there is one of those changes *and* the author wants to signal a new development in the story or argument.[62]

If we can understand the true function of the Greek conjunction δέ, we can bring this out in our discussion of the passage, even if it is hard to make fully apparent in a translation.[63] "Δέ is a coordinating conjunction like καί, but it includes the added constraint of signaling a new development… The use of δέ represents the writer's choice to explicitly signal that what follows is a new, distinct development in the story or argument, based on how the writer conceived of it."[64] This implies that what follows builds on what has already been related in the story.[65] On the other hand, if there is a distinct shift in focus [e.g. from one character to another], but this is not introduced by δέ, then this signals that what follows is not a development from what has already been related; the relationship might be ambiguous.[66]

In narrative, an author might string together each series of events with καί but signal the shift from one thematic series to the next with δέ; this can happen at multiple levels, at the

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[60] Runge, 29.

[61] Runge, 30-31; Levinsohn, 77.

[62] Levinsohn, 72, 77.

[63] Runge, 31.

[64] Runge, 31.

[65] Levinsohn, 76.

[66] Levinsohn, 77.

change of each event in a scene and the change between dramatic scenes.[67] An author like John

also might use δέ to signal a shift to "background material that moves the story to something

distinctive," as in introducing a new item or character to the story or shifting to another character

as part of relating this information to what went before.[68] On the other hand, in Luke 2.1-20, καί

connects all events in the passage [particularly the background information], except that δέ

introduces distinctive events involving the principal characters.[69] Levinsohn's further analysis

suggests that Luke consistently used δέ in his gospel to break one scene from another.

Alternatively, an author might use δέ only at the conclusion of a scene, to signal that his intent in

relating that scene was all about leading up to the climactic conclusion;[70] this helps the exegete

grasp the main point of the passage, and not get lost in expositing about the details of the scene.

Obviously, writing style will vary among authors, and for each author the style will

depend in part on the genre and the specific purpose for each writing. For example, while

Matthew and Luke used δέ in their gospels to signal developments in each scene and from one

scene to the next, Mark tended to use δέ less often, primarily only when there was a significant

change in the setting or primary character.[71] As mentioned earlier, John's default was asyndeton,

so if there was no significant development in the story line and no close connection, he would

not use a connective; if there was a close connection between events but not a significant

development in the story line, he used καί; if there was a development but not a close connection,

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[67] Levinsohn, 74-75.

[68] Levinsohn, 90; see also, 87.

[69] Levinsohn, 76.

[70] Levinsohn, 74.

[71] Levinsohn, 80.

he used δέ; if there was a development with close connection, he used οὖν [other authors might have continued to use δέ].[72]

In an epistle, within one sentence or in a series of sentences, the author might use δέ to distinguish that these are not just equal elements being joined, but distinct elements that move toward the same point.[73] For example, in James 1.2-11, there is a series of points connected by δέ, and for each this means that while there is a shift in topical focus, this new point builds on [or develops from] what has already been said, rather than starting something new.[74] Sometimes δέ introduces background or parenthetical material: for example, in 1 Timothy 3.5, it introduces such material, and Paul's choice of δέ instead of γὰρ signals that this parenthetical material develops the argument from the preceding material, rather than merely explaining it;[75] in such a case, δέ might not translate at all into English. While δέ itself does not carry an adversative connotation, it is often used in situations in which there is contrast, but what it signals is development; the contrast was already inherent in the text.[76]

Conclusion

The above discussion of discourse analysis is a simplified explanation; there is a lot more complexity to the processes of analyzing the use of these connectives overall and of discerning what they indicate in each instance. However, it should be apparent that while students of the New Testament are equipped with excellent tools for morphology, syntax, and lexicology, those excellent tools do not complete the equipping of the student for accurate analysis and

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[72] Levinsohn, 82.

[73] Runge, 36; Levinsohn, 112.

[74] Levinsohn, 116.

[75] Levinsohn, 114.

[76] Levinsohn, 113.

interpretation of the biblical text. Discourse analysis offers another tool, one which is useful for discerning authorial intent and meaning, one which sometimes is necessary for accuracy in those endeavors.

Appendix: An Illustration from Philippians

A BibleWorks search within the book of Philippians shows twenty-seven uses of δέ in twenty-four verses.

1.12-14 is connected to the previous thought by δέ, which suggests both a discontinuity and a developmental relationship to what has gone before: If the Philippians increase in love, knowledge, discernment, and righteousness as Paul has hoped for them in 1.9-11, then they will understand how to see that his circumstances of imprisonment are not shameful, but actually useful for the gospel.

The δέ in 1.15-16 signals that the second half of the passage builds on the first half: these others preach from goodwill, out of the type of love Paul hopes the Philippians will have.

1.17 is connected by δέ, signaling both a change in the people in focus and a development in the argument: those not preaching out of love do so out of selfish ambition and a desire for disunity.

1.22 is connected with δέ, marking a new development in Paul's argument, but one that builds on what he just said in 1.21[77]: there is a value to living, of continuing to serve God.

1.23-24, connected with δέ, again builds on what was said in 1.22[78]: there is value in both possibilities, to be with Christ in Heaven or to stay and meet the needs of the Philippians.

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[77] The thought is my own, but I find that Levinsohn, 117, agrees.

[78] The thought is my own, but I find that Levinsohn, 118, agrees.

The δέ in 1.24 marks the development of this second half of the sentence in relation to the first half in 1.23: while he longs to depart, he also understands the value to them of his remaining.

The δέ in 1.28 marks a new development in the argument: the opposition they are facing is a sign of their own salvation because they are to suffer for Christ as they have seen Paul suffer.

The δέ in 2.8 shows that the concept of death on the cross is a development of the argument in general: the thought shifts from the argument in 2.5-8a about humility for believers as they follow Christ to the argument that will follow about the effects of Christ's humility in going to death on a cross.

The δέ in 2.18 marks the shift from Paul's rejoicing to theirs.

2.19 is connected with δέ, showing this new topic develops what has gone before: sending Timothy to them would aid in their rejoicing and Paul's.

2.22 is connected by δέ, marking a shift from those seeking their own interests to the contrast of the value of Timothy.

The δέ in 2.24 marks the development from sending Timothy to Paul going as well.

2.25-26 is connected by δέ, marking the development of also sending Epaphroditus.

The δέ later in 2.25 marks the shift from Paul's valuation of Epaphroditus to Epaphroditus' function for them which is to Paul's benefit.

The δέ in 2.27c marks the shift from mercy on Epaphroditus to mercy on Paul.

The δέ in 3.1 marks the shift of focus from Paul to the readers.

The δέ in 3.12 marks a shift from the concept of having already attained perfection to the concept of pursuing it, showing Paul's new line of thought is related but a development from what he has just finished saying in 3.7-11.

The first δέ in 3.13 represents the same shift in thought as in the previous verse.[79]

The second δέ in 3.13 is part of a μέν...δέ construction, but it marks the shift from a focus on the past to one on the future, which is the context for the following discussion.

The δέ in 3.18 is challenging to understand. The sentence begins with an explanatory γάρ, so the δέ should not be signaling anything about the sentence as a whole. That seems to rule out signaling that what Paul is about to say about these people is the focus of the δέ as signaling a development in the argument. Rather, the δέ seems to signal that the shift from Paul's previous mention of these people to his present mention with weeping is a dramatic point: that while he might have warned them of these people in the past, now his anguish about them was heightened and this heightening of anguish itself is a development in the discussion.

4.10 is connected by δέ, and signals that the new discussion about their revived interest in supporting Paul is a related development from the previous discussion about emulating Paul; the inference seems to be that if they emulate him as he emulates Christ, then it would be a natural result that they would support him in his ministry.

The second δέ in 4.10 merely signals the last part of the sentence as building on what was just said: they had interest before but could not support him.

4.15 is connected by δέ, showing the discussion about their past support is a development from the discussion of their present support.

4.18 is connected by δέ, marking the shift from the benefits to them of giving to the benefits to Paul of their giving.

4.19 is connected by δέ, showing that Paul's comment about God's provision for them is a connected development from his discussion about their giving to him.

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[79] The thought is my own, but I find that Levinsohn, 118, agrees that the information in this verse is repeated from the previous one.

4.20 is connected by δέ, marking the discussion of the glory attributable to God being a development from the discussion of God's provision to them.

The δέ in 4.22 highlights one of the most important things in this letter. In the beginning, Paul was concerned that they understand properly that his imprisonment was not shameful, but rather useful for Christ. Here, he shows the evidence: despite being imprisoned, he has reached into the very household of the emperor and led people to Christ!

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